

CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
FLOOR STATEMENT FOR ENERGY BILL – GENERAL DEBATE
April 20, 2005

Mr. Chairman:

With great regret but with even greater conviction, I rise in opposition to this bill. While this bill certainly has some worthy provisions, including those reported out by our Science Committee, overall this bill is a step backward.

The bill will not lessen our dependence on foreign oil, and it will do nothing to reduce energy prices. It will increase the deficit, weaken our economy, compromise our national security and endanger our environment.

The supporters of this bill are certainly right about one thing – we desperately need a good national energy policy. This measure does not pass that test.

Our growing dependence of foreign oil puts us at the mercy of unstable and unfriendly foreign regimes. It gives terrorists additional targets and puts money in their hands. It weakens the dollar by worsening the balance of trade. It pumps money out of the domestic economy and into the hands of those who wish us ill. In short, our oil dependence represents a significant and growing threat to our national security.

So what do we need to do to reduce our dependence on foreign oil? Yes, we need to increase the supply of fossil, nuclear and renewable energy.

But most importantly, we need to become more energy efficient. And what does this bill do to make us more energy efficient? Virtually nothing.

The federal Energy Information Administration found that last year's energy bill would have almost no impact on energy demand and energy prices – and that bill, if anything, made more of an effort to tame consumption. The Alliance for an Energy Efficient Economy (ACEEE) has estimated that this year's Energy Bill would not save a single barrel of oil by 2020.

That is both tragedy and farce. We know how to treat our oil addiction. We can make appliances more energy efficient without inconveniencing anyone. We can make our cars more efficient without sacrificing safety. My CAFE amendment would reduce oil consumption in 2020 by two million barrels a day. That's more than twice the amount that is expected per day from drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

What does this bill do instead of trying to make us more energy efficient?

Well, at a time of fiscal crisis and record oil prices, the bill provides new mandatory spending that will go directly to the oil industry, and it provides mandatory breaks for the oil industry on royalties.

The bill provides massive tax breaks for profitable oil companies and next to nothing for new technologies that could help wean us from foreign oil. Here's what the President said last week on that issue. He said, "With \$55 oil we don't need incentives to oil and gas companies to explore." What we need is to put a strategy in place that will help this country over time become less dependent. The President's budget devoted 72 percent of its proposed energy tax incentives to alternatives; this bill devotes just 6 percent to alternatives while providing more than a billion dollars more in tax breaks.

We wouldn't have to look far to come up with some better ideas. While this House has been writing a bill based on ideological purity rather than careful analysis, others have come up with bipartisan, sensible, balanced approaches to energy policy. Groups like the National Commission on Energy Policy and the Alliance to Save Energy and the Energy Future Coalition all have offered carefully considered proposals that could have formed the basis of an effective bill with Republican credentials.

But instead we've decided to close our minds and open our purse in a way that will harm taxpayers and consumers, and weaken our economic health and national security.

We can do better. We ought to do better. We have an obligation to do better. Let's defeat this bill and start over.